

October 23, 2023

Dear Economic and Community Development Committee Members,

My name is Sarah Elton and I am a professor at Toronto Metropolitan University and director of the Food Health Ecosystems lab, where my team conducts research into the Toronto food system. I write to urge you to support the creation of a public market action plan for our city. A public market action plan would take advantage of the existing public food system infrastructure of the Ontario Food Terminal.

Research conducted at my lab since 2020 has found that our city benefits from a diversity of food retail businesses. While big box supermarkets dominate close to 80 percent of the food and beverage industry in this country, here in Toronto we are fortunate to have a diverse foodscape where we can purchase fruits and vegetables sourced through the Ontario Food Terminal at retail establishments including corner grocers, flea markets, and independent grocers including those serving what are called "ethno-cultural foodways." A public market plan would capitalize on the benefits that the Terminal already provides to the city which are:

- The wholesale terminal supports both small and mid-sized businesses that pay merely \$275 for two years of access to buying at the wholesale market.
- The Terminal allows buyers to source from various supply chains meaning that they can pick and choose where to source produce based on considerations such as price and quality; this benefits the consumer.
- The Terminal allows for relationships to form between buyers and sellers which our lab found to help our city weather serious challenges posed by COVID-19.
- The Terminal supports the kind of competition that the Competition Bureau called for in the Canadian grocery industry in its July 2023 report.

For these reasons, it would be beneficial for the city to support a public market action plan. For more information about the benefits that the Ontario Food Terminal provides our city, please visit www.torontomu.ca/foodlab. I would be happy to answer any questions about this work.

Sincerely,
Dr. Sarah Elton
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